

# **SELF DEFENSE**

from a  
Biblical Perspective

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**BILL RUDGE**



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## **Self Defense from a Biblical Perspective**

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# Street Survival Strategies



W

hile walking back to our hotel room in Florida one afternoon, my wife and I saw three hawks and five crows having a skirmish. A few minutes later, my teenage granddaughter was walking with her younger sister on the same sidewalk to our room. She felt something thump the back of her head and then land in her hair (which was in a bun on top of her head). Instinctively, without knowing what it was, she reacted with an overhead hook punch that sent a startled hawk flying out of her hair. It perched on a tree branch overhead, glaring at her while she glared back at it. She was angry at its audacity to land in her hair. She waited in case it flew at her again, so she could punch it in the face for violating her. For two minutes, she and the hawk glared at each other. After two minutes of staring at each other, she chose to be the “bigger” one and walked away. EMTs came to her room to clean the cut on her head.

Another unexpected attack occurred on the Appalachian Trail a few years earlier in 2019. While staying at a bed and breakfast, my wife and I were told the following account by the manager who was nicknamed Jaws (he had previously worked with emergency rescue personnel using the Jaws of Life). He recalled the time he was hiking the Appalachian Trail with some other people who randomly met on the trail. One night, he noticed James, who was hiking the trail with them, exhibiting some strange and erratic behavior, so he warned the others that they needed to get away from him. They chose to stay in a group with James included. So, Jaws, trusting his gut instinct, went on ahead by himself. That night, James fatally stabbed one of the male hikers and severely wounded a female hiker with a hunting knife.

In both of the above bizarre “attacks” are several elements of self-defense that I cover in my Street Survival Strategies class, some of which are indirectly included in this book. Read on to see if you can discover them.

Keeping young people and adults alive and unharmed is my purpose for teaching Street Survival Strategies (SSS) in schools and other places. The goal of

these presentations is to teach students how to avert attacks, avoid being bullied or victimized, prevent date rape and learn self-protection techniques in assault situations. I want to keep students safe on the street and in this world by teaching them self-defense principles and techniques for protecting themselves against those who would victimize them—including themselves who can sometimes be their own “worst enemy.”

Protecting oneself from the opportunistic bully and defending oneself from an attacker is important but equally crucial is safeguarding yourself from yourself. Don't be your own worst enemy by making foolish or self-destructive choices; instead, make wise decisions.

Using student volunteers to role-play different real-life scenarios, I explain and demonstrate what to do and what not to do when in potentially perilous situations or confronted by an assailant when defending oneself is the only option. I also relate a few of my own life-threatening experiences wherein I witnessed God's protection in ways that were beyond the capacity of self-defense or physical skill to have helped save me.

As the world becomes more and more violent and dangerous, we must use common sense principles and techniques such as those I teach during my SSS class but, above all, we must implement the principles in God's Word and trust the Lord for protection.

# Learning to Survive



As a kid and young teen, bigger and older guys always wanted to fight me. They waited for me after school, hid behind trees as I walked by, caught me alone at night, came to my house or sent someone after me. Having two older brothers saved me a few times, but I usually kept my problems to myself and dealt with them alone. I had to develop some creative ways to deal with confrontations.

Something that worked a few times was saying to those wanting to fight me, "I have a friend (and I would mention someone I knew they would fear), and he told me to tell you that if you fight me, you have to fight him too!"

Through many youthful experiences, I would learn the truth and wisdom of such Proverbs as:

A wise man is strong, and a person of knowledge increases power (Proverbs 24:5).

Other times, I would say to some bullies loud enough for all to hear, "If you are so tough, why don't you pick on someone your own size?" I would point to or mention someone stronger than them as I continued, "or are you afraid of them?" Every time they would change the subject and come back to wanting to fight or harass me, I would repeat it until they learned it was too embarrassing to mess with me. Bullies are always looking for someone to victimize, embarrass and humiliate. When you effectively turn it around, they usually will not bother you anymore because they do not want to be embarrassed.

The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; the one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin (Proverbs 13:3).

Once, as a sophomore or junior in high school, I said something obnoxious to a classmate. She had a boyfriend in the Army (a couple of years older than me)

and told him what I said. She mockingly informed me one day at school that he was going to beat me up.

A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are the snare of his soul  
(Proverbs 18:7).

When her boyfriend was home on leave, he came to my house looking for me. Thinking fast, I said to him, "My older friend (he was really just an acquaintance at the time) in the Marine Corps Recon just happens to be home on leave, too (which he was). He bench-presses over 400 pounds and is the 'bouncer' in his platoon. He told me to tell you if you want to fight me, that's fine, but you have to fight him next." He got in his car and drove away. I never saw him again. The whole confrontation could have been avoided, however, if only I would have obeyed the following advice:

Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you (Proverbs 4:24-25 NIV).

By looking straight ahead, I avoided numerous fights when I was younger. While walking home on side streets or through the downtown, hoodlums standing along the street would often glare and say something cutting. If I stared back or responded in any way, it would anger them and lead to getting roughed up. If I ignored them and kept looking straight ahead, they usually left me alone.

He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding (Proverbs 17:27).

Once I reached the age of 15 and was getting stronger, I sometimes purposely stared back to let them know I was no longer intimidated. It did, however, lead to a few fights.

Mockers stir up a city, but the wise turn away anger (Proverbs 29:8 NIV).

If girls were present with the "hoods," it was even more dangerous because the guys would get more contentious and combative trying to impress their girlfriends. And, when under the influence of alcohol, hostile behavior rapidly increased.

Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise (Proverbs 20:1).

I would sometimes tell someone bigger and older who wanted to fight me, "If you win, big deal. No one will be impressed because you are bigger. But, what if I beat you up? You will look stupid. And I will be sure to get in some good hits either way to mess up your face!"



Another tactic I used was to say: "You want to fight me, that's fine. You knock me down; I will get back up. You knock me out; when I come to, I am coming after you. You break my arm; I will use the other arm. You break my leg; I will crawl after you. I will not give up; I will keep coming until I get you!" Most of them did not want to fight after that.

The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so abandon the quarrel before it breaks out (Proverbs 17:14).

## The Bully Thinking Twice

*by Glen Rudge*

I was blinded by fury,  
distraught with despair.  
The bully tormented,  
but why did I care?  
Because I was the target.  
The victim this time.  
When it happened to others?  
I didn't mind.  
But now it was personal,  
this time it was me.  
This time I was forced to see.  
I had turned a blind eye,  
because I was scared.  
But now? This time?  
Somebody cared.  
He shouted, HEY,  
This isn't right,  
and he stepped up to the bully,  
preparing to fight.  
My aggressor he left,  
not wanting confrontation.  
And he walked away laughing,  
with no explanation.  
Would he come back?  
To start a new fight?  
No, for he was a cockroach,  
afraid of the light.  
The light of another,  
willing to stand,  
up to the bully,  
something he had not planned.

Sometimes, I would call the bully's bluff like the time a big upperclassman

hassled me at the water fountain in high school. We agreed to fight after a dance on Saturday night. I trained the rest of the week for the impending fight with this much bigger opponent. When we both showed up at the appointed place and time, he backed down at the last moment and decided not to fight. He used the excuse that he had torn his pants in a recent fight, and his mother would kill him if he did so again. Sometimes, calling someone's bluff works; sometimes, it doesn't.

Avoiding strife is an honor for a person, but any fool will quarrel  
(Proverbs 20:3).

Although I was beaten up a few times, as I became stronger from lifting weights, those I didn't like or considered an enemy were on the receiving end of my revenge. When I became the victimizer instead of the victim, I challenged many guys to fight. When one guy did not back down despite my larger muscles, I figured he must know something I did not know, so I quickly made peace. On another occasion, however, when a guy I despised and wanted to get revenge on stood up to me, I called his bluff and fought him in a back alley in his neighborhood. After hitting him in the face and the back of the head over 20 times, I left him face down in the snow in a puddle of blood. I certainly am not proud of myself concerning this violence. Amazingly, we later became best friends.

Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man (Proverbs 3:3-4).

My friends and I didn't always fight fair. We used any means to win, such as sucker punching a foe as he took off his jacket, throwing dirt in his eyes or ganging up on him. Sometimes, I would point and say, "Hey, there are the cops!" or, "There is your mother!" When he looked, I would hit him. We used other strategies to defeat or intimidate opponents such as brandishing weapons.

Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit  
(Psalm 34:13).

I learned to do everything fast. I talked and walked fast. As a kid, I had the fastest rope climb record at the Boy's Buhl Club during the annual Super Circus. I changed my clothes faster than anyone else after open gym. I would be changed and out of the locker room in about sixty seconds, while most were still coming down from the gym.

I learned to move fast because I had so many older and bigger guys wanting to beat me up that I had to get away fast to survive. I learned to talk fast because, sometimes, they caught me alone, and I had to talk my way out of it. I learned to block and strike fast because sometimes I could not talk my way out of it.

He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but he who walks wisely will be delivered (Proverbs 28:26).

The speed I developed as a youth to survive bullies benefited me in many ways later on in life. I was one of the fastest stockers and baggers at a grocery store where I worked when I was 16. I was one of the fastest gluers and clampers at a window factory where I worked while attending Bible college. I was also one of the fastest counters when I did overnight inventory for a grocery store chain while starting my ministry. My fast reflexes also protected me from several falls on ice and other probable accidents.

Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth (Proverbs 27:1).

When I was about 13 years old, a teenager just out of the detention center who was several years older and much bigger would harass me. I finally told one of my older brothers who knew this guy's older brother. The harassment quickly stopped, but, after his brother was killed in Vietnam and my brother was sent to South Korea, the harassment began again. The only solution I could find at the time, which was probably not the best solution, was to befriend him and start hanging out with him.

Do not make friends with a person given to anger, or go with a hot-tempered person, or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself (Proverbs 22:24-25).

At age 17, while at a dance with several older friends on another gang's turf, we were unexpectedly surrounded by many guys intent on doing us bodily harm. Crazy George, as we called him, told the leader of the other gang that he had a pistol in his boot and would shoot him first if there was any trouble. They reluctantly let us leave.

He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm (Proverbs 13:20).

As I got stronger from lifting weights and started becoming proficient at karate, I loved to fight. I could share numerous illustrations of how, before coming to Christ, my friends and I suffered adverse consequences and physical injuries from fighting and attacking others or from being attacked. Involvement in aggressive and foolish behavior resulted in many people being seriously injured and a few being killed. Some served prison sentences for acts of violence.

There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death (Proverbs 14:12).

# Creative Strategies for Dealing with Confrontations



**B**efore becoming a Christian, I liked to defeat opponents with my fists, but now I enjoy the challenge of defusing threatening situations with words. I rely on God's wisdom and support to overcome the problem which is influencing the person's aggressive behavior.

I have learned that "wisdom is better than strength" (Ecclesiastes 9:16) and "wisdom is better than weapons of war" (Ecclesiastes 9:18).

While I faced brawls, knives and gangs, today's generation encounters terrorism, guns and human trafficking. However, biblical principles of self-defense are timeless and still hold true.

When fasting, I often pray: "Lord, when verbal, physical or spiritual conflicts and confrontations rise up, help me to have cool, calm composure; wisdom to know what to say or do; courage and strength to do it; and victory as the end result."

My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you (Proverbs 3:1-2).

Since coming to know Christ at the age of 18, I have not had to physically fight to defend myself. I came close a few times and could have hurt my testimony, but the Spirit enabled me to maintain control and to resolve the conflicts peacefully, without violence.

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense (Proverbs 19:11 ESV).

When teaching self-defense in schools and for other groups, I demonstrate

how to avoid potential clashes and how to deal with attack situations. “The most important principle,” I tell the students, “is to use wisdom by avoiding places, people and situations in which a confrontation or an attack is likely to occur.”

The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; he who watches his way preserves his life (Proverbs 16:17).

It is virtually impossible, however, to avoid all disputes. I have been in the midst of several—some very intense. As I sought to respond from a biblical perspective of love, wisdom and self-control, I noticed some beneficial results. The following are just a few of the creative methods I have used for dealing with confrontations since becoming a Christian.

## Handling Harassment

As a new Christian in Bible college, I worked at a window factory where many employees liked to harass the Christians. Because of my rough past, I had a hard time dealing with that. I worked across the assembly line from a guy who had a smart mouth when his friends were nearby. He continually tried to irritate me because I would tell him about Christ. At times, I wanted to jump over the assembly line, grab him and put glue on his face, but the Lord gave me a better plan—I do not war in the flesh anymore (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).

One night, I went out to his house to talk to him about working on my car. As we talked, I gradually led him toward the woods nearby, which at that time of night had grown pitch black and was full of foreboding sounds. As we walked, I shared with him about knowing the Lord. I told him the illustration about a man who said that he would show people how to find God. While standing in the ocean with someone, he would unexpectedly grab the person behind the head and push their face into the surf. As they came out of the water gasping for air, he would say, “When you want to find God as badly as you wanted your next breath, you will find Him.” As the story went, I grabbed him behind the head and bent his head down. He screamed in terror and was nice at work from then on.

I love to get those who act tough into an isolated setting and talk to them one-on-one about the Lord and eternity because, when they are all alone, they usually are not so menacing. I find that when you are dealing with people who are rough (gang members, martial artists, weightlifters, athletes, those in Special Forces), it is sometimes difficult to witness to them in a group; they have an image to maintain. However, when I get them away from others, they are usually much more receptive.

The fear of man brings a snare, but one who trusts in the LORD will be protected (Proverbs 29:25).

## Delivered from Arms of Steel

While still a relatively new Christian, I was in Bible college and doing street ministry in the city where the college operated a coffeehouse. While witnessing to a bricklayer with arms of steel, he angrily put his two hands around my throat and started to squeeze. As the blood flow and oxygen were being cut off, he asked, "Okay, Christian, are you ready to die?"

I may have been able to knee or elbow him or gouge his eyes with a finger jab, but, when I am being persecuted for my faith, I try not to use any physical force to resist or retaliate. I try to be like Stephen and trust God to either deliver me or give me the grace and strength to endure (Acts 7:59-60). I flexed my throat and slightly turned my neck as I responded, "If God wants me to die, then I am ready to die."

Suddenly, he released that vise grip around my throat as tears began to flow down his face. He told me why he hated God and Christians: his daughter died from a terrible disease, and God did not answer his prayer to heal her.

We talked further, and I was able to share God's love and truth with him and bring some healing and help. I have learned to look beyond people's aggressive and obnoxious behavior to see the hurt which may be motivating it.

There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing (Proverbs 12:18).

## Sometimes You Have to Take a Stand

After graduating from Bible college, I took a position as a youth pastor in North Carolina. To supplement my income, I was employed by a small convenience store from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m., the graveyard shift, where I was working alone. To show how dangerous this could be, a man in a similar store just a few miles down the road had been robbed and shot to death. It was in this setting that a gang came in from a neighboring city, spread out through the store and shoplifted. Some young men who often came into the store said, "Bill, when that gang comes in again, we are going to stand with you, and we will get the stuff back." I said, "Okay, guys, great. Let's do it."

Sure enough, the gang came when my buddies happened to be there. As before, the gang went through the store and began to take whatever they wanted. They paid for a few items and then walked outside with all the stuff they had stolen and got into their car. I said, "Okay, guys, you told me if they stole again you would stand with me. Let's go out there and get the stuff back."

One guy said, "Man, there are six of them and four of us!" He went back in the cooler to hide. Another guy went in the restroom and locked the door. The third guy sat there on the check-out counter saying, "No way! There are too many of them, Bill." I replied, "Thanks guys!" and walked outside alone. I knocked on their car door window, and they rolled it down. "Guys," I said, "you stole some stuff, and I want it back." All four doors opened and the six of them

got out and encircled me. There was no way in that close proximity that I could effectively defend myself. I was totally vulnerable. Again, I said, “Guys, you stole some stuff, and I want it back!” They looked at me, then at each other. They didn’t know whether to attack me or what to do. Suddenly, they reached into their pockets and began to pull out some of the merchandise. They threw it at me, got in their car and drove off.

Don’t be foolish or crazy for that is tempting the Lord. However, there comes a point in our lives when we can no longer compromise and conform but must stand for what is right and true.

The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are bold as a lion (Proverbs 28:1).

## Disarming a Potentially Explosive Situation

While a teenager was shopping at the mall, his parents loaded up a moving van and left without him. My staff was trying to get him on welfare and into his own apartment, but his parents, who still wanted to claim him on welfare, were extremely irate with us for doing so. I am still uncertain how they expected him to survive without money and a place to live.

When he was able to contact them, he set up a meeting in a rough neighborhood and asked me to be there. His mother, father and uncle all got out of their car. They looked like professional wrestlers. They stood around me screaming and swearing. My terrified wife sat in our car watching this unfold (before the days of cell phones when she could have called the police). I was certain they were going to attack me and throw me through the storefront window I was standing in front of. My initial reaction was to yell back, then strike and kick them before they could assault me, but God brought my spirit under control and reminded me of Proverbs 15:1:

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

So, I began to calmly talk to them, “Do you want to act like children throwing a temper tantrum, or do you want to reason like mature adults with self-control and strength?” The explosive situation was neutralized, and, instead of them throwing me through the window, a somewhat friendly conversation ensued, and the problem was resolved.

One who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles (Proverbs 21:23).

## Impulsive Behavior Is Destructive

While still in my twenties, an irate man came onto ministry property while I was

outside playing football with my youngest brother and some other teens at the ministry center. He was a tall truck driver who passed through our area and would visit a woman living nearby. He aggressively accused me of telling an adjacent business not to let him park his truck there, and he assumed I was spreading rumors about his fiancée.

Avoiding strife is an honor for a person, but any fool will quarrel (Proverbs 20:3).

He was a big man and wrongly thought he would intimidate me. I stood my ground and said that if I had a problem with his truck or fiancée, I would have said it to his face. I told him to call the manager of that store, and he would discover that his allegations were completely false. Before he left, I said, "Be sure to come back and let me know what he tells you." When he did not come back the next day, I went to his fiancée's house and knocked on the door. He slowly answered and nervously apologized. I said, "Next time, do not be so impulsive; get your facts straight before you accuse someone."

With his mouth the godless person destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous will be rescued (Proverbs 11:9).

## A Reckless Carload of Teens

On my way home from speaking at a businessmen's banquet one evening, a carload of five high school teens followed closely down the narrow two-lane road. They were driving recklessly, getting right on my bumper several times and swerving from lane to lane. They could have killed us, themselves or hit an oncoming car head-on.

When we reached the outskirts of the city, they sped past me. At a red light, I pulled up behind them. My wife and a friend remained inside as I jumped out of the van. I still had a suit on, and my tie flapped over my shoulder in my haste to approach the driver's window. I intended to teach them a lesson that might save their lives in the future—or someone else's. I told the driver in so many words, "If you ever do that again, I will bust your head. And I will take on all five of you right now if you want to get out!" They rolled up their windows and locked the doors.

On the lips of the discerning, wisdom is found, but a rod is for the back of him who has no sense (Proverbs 10:13).

As well as hopefully teaching them a valuable lesson, I, too, learned one. With the increase of road rage, it is not a good idea to respond aggressively to dangerous drivers. Strong responses usually result in an escalation of hostility from agitated people.

A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself



## Love Is Disarming

My daughter, Tabitha, was in sixth grade when she first attended a public school. The toughest girl in the sixth grade was continually picking on her and threatening to beat her up. We prayed and talked about it. I advised Tabitha to be kind to her and to give her a Valentine's Day card. This girl could not believe Tabitha would give her one, considering how mean she had been to her. As a result, they became good friends. Several years later, she protected Tabitha from some girls on an opposing school's cheerleading squad who wanted to start a fight with her.

When a person's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he causes even his enemies to make peace with him (Proverbs 16:7).

## Defiance vs Insubordination

As a sophomore in high school, Tabitha, who had just been listed in Who's Who and featured in a national Christian youth magazine, was talking in class along with several other students. The substitute teacher turned in all their names, so the new vice principal decided to expel just the academic students to make an example of them to the school. He said they were defiant and insubordinate. Usually, I supported the school, but this time was different. At the parent-student meeting with the new vice principal regarding their talking in class, he rolled his pen the entire time I spoke about the meaning of defiance and insubordination and how his excessive response would undermine the positive influence of five exemplary students. So, I said, "Mr. R, you are not paying attention to me because you keep playing with that pen." He immediately stopped. I then explained how ridiculous his terminology was as I shared what defiant meant to someone from the West Hill.

Mr. R was so impressed by what I said at the meeting that he retracted his statement and punishment for the students. He said to me, "Now I know where to get a good assembly speaker." It is ironic that, at the same moment he was writing a letter to expel Tabitha and the other students for talking, the junior high principal called him at the high school and asked, "What would you do if you caught two students fighting?" When Mr. R said, "Expel them," the junior high principal replied, "Consider your son expelled!"

One week to the day on which he said my daughter and the four others were defiant for talking, he found out how accurate my definition of defiant was when a student punched him in the face. He talked to me a few weeks later at the girls' track team picnic and apologetically said, "After that happened, I knew what you meant!"

A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of

understanding will acquire wise counsel (Proverbs 1:5).

## A Time to Intercede

While at soccer games, a boy about two or three years older than my 10-year-old son, BJ, would constantly pick on him and threaten him because he was an excellent soccer player. Not wanting to interfere, I let it go for several weeks because I believed in letting my children try to work out their own problems with bullies. Nonetheless, due to the age difference and because this guy was relentless, I called him on the phone without my son knowing. I said, “I work with many youths from rough neighborhoods who are your age and who love to box and fight. So, if you like fighting so much, I am sure I can arrange for someone your own age and size to fight you.” He never bullied my son again.

One who rebukes a person will afterward find more favor than one who flatters with the tongue (Proverbs 28:23).

## Calling His Bluff

On another occasion, when my son was in eighth grade, an older and tougher boy in his class began to push BJ around and slam him against lockers. After about a week of this not letting up, and his threatening to mess up my son’s face, I told BJ to tell him they could meet at his house or ours and fight it out with boxing gloves. I tried to recommend the most peaceful alternative available. However, he told BJ he wanted to fight in front of his friends the next day after school. I gave BJ a crash course on self-defense since he was not motivated to learn it before. Then, I told BJ that the best way to deal with this is to go to the guy’s house now and say, “You want to fight so bad, let’s do it now and get it over with.” I reasoned that, if he was going to get beaten up, it is better to do so without everyone watching.

When this guy saw BJ at his front door, he said, “What is wrong with you? I am not going to fight here with my mother and grandmother around.” He did not bother BJ again. In fact, they became friends, and, a week later, he was at our house acting as though nothing had ever happened. A few months later, he made a commitment to Christ when we took him to church with us.

The wise of heart will receive commands, but a babbling fool will be ruined. He who walks in integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out (Proverbs 10:8-9).

## Do You Still Want to Fight?

My wife and I went to pick up our teenage daughter, Tabitha, and her cheerleader friend after a football game. I assumed that, since she did not call, she did not have access to a phone and would be waiting for me. By the time

Karen and I arrived at the stadium, almost everyone was gone. While driving down the dimly lit side alley around the stadium looking for her, a guy with long blond hair, shirtless and with six other guys, yelled to me, "What are you looking at?"

My natural reaction was to respond with a smart remark, park the car and jump out. Instead of allowing me to resort to my former ways, the Lord has dealt with me to deal with confrontations in more positive ways.

I stopped the car, rolled down the window and unlocked the door, so I could get out if needed. The guy with long blond hair and his buddies came up to the car. "Do you have a problem?" I asked. Yes! They had a problem all right, and I was it.

Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult (Proverbs 12:16 NIV).

So, what do I do? Give in to my natural impulse to get out and fight, possibly getting messed up or face a lawsuit and harm my testimony? Maybe I should get out and try to reason with them, but the one I was having the confrontation with was drunk and probably the others were too? Perhaps I should drive away?

Karen was hollering at me to leave. Concerned about what might happen to her and realizing there was no possibility of having a coherent conversation with them in their drunken condition, I said that I would meet them later. Emotions of anger, frustration and pity enveloped me. Anger because of their offensive behavior, frustration because I knew the Lord did not want me fighting and pity because I saw myself in them when I was their age. They told me to meet them at the park later that night.

The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence (Proverbs 10:11).

Arriving at home, I was relieved to find out that Tabitha had gotten a ride from someone else. I considered going back and meeting them, but I still needed to finish a new message I was to share the next morning at a church where I was the guest speaker. So I stayed home and completed the message. The service the next day went very well. Later that afternoon while relaxing, I remembered the young man with long blond hair and his friends, and felt compelled to locate and witness to them.

"Lord, help me to find them," I prayed. I drove through the town but did not see them. Finally, I asked a jogger who told me where the park was. However, they were not there. A teen I knew lived in the projects across the street from the park, so I asked him if he knew a guy who had long blond hair. He replied, "Sure!" Then he told me his first and last name. He said Kenny had quit school and that he and his buddies often hang out in a tent behind the housing units, but they were not there at this time. I asked him to let me know when he sees

him again, so I can talk to him.

The next day, I received a call that Kenny was there. My wife wanted me to take someone, but I said, “No, I must go alone.” I parked my car and walked through the projects looking for them. I had no idea how or by whom I would be greeted. I did not know if he and his friends would attack me as soon as they saw me, but I had to obey what the Lord had spoken to my heart.

Opening the flap door of the tent, I looked inside and saw about seven guys smoking marijuana. “Hey guys,” I said, “I’m here to talk with you.” Kenny said, “Oh yeah, you’re the guy from Saturday night,” as he remained sitting. “Do you guys know who I am?” I asked. Although they did not recognize me Saturday night, they found out later who I was. One guy said, “Yeah, you did assemblies at our school.” Another one remembered me from the defense and total fitness classes I ran at the ministry center. Kenny said that, when he was eleven, his grandmother brought him to my house because he had no father.

Jokingly, I said, “Do you want to fight me one at a time or all at once?” One guy started heading out of the tent while the rest responded, “No!” Another guy said he had boxed with me and one of my volunteers at the center and had gotten a black eye. I replied, “It wasn’t me who hit you, because I always control my punches” as I demonstrated a speed punch within a fraction of an inch to his face. One of the guys responded, “That was fast!”

Explaining that I did not come to fight, but that they reminded me of myself when I was 18, I told them about some of my friends who had been killed or were in prison. I also told them about injuries from former fights and foolishness and invited them to come up to the ministry center and work out or to talk if they ever had a problem.

Before leaving, I said, “I had the courage to come here alone not knowing who or what I would run into, so now I want you guys to have the courage to come to my place.” I handed Kenny my audio message called “Courage to Stand Alone,” as I said to him, “I want you to listen to this by yourself and then pass it around.” A couple of the guys simultaneously said, “I want it second.”

Returning home after this encounter in the tent, I told my wife that, unless I am attacked or someone else is being attacked, I never want to fight again. I felt awful thinking that I nearly fought these guys—possibly injuring them and myself. That night, I read Proverbs 29 during our family Bible study and the Lord reaffirmed through His Word what His Spirit spoke to my heart.

Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him. An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression (Proverbs 29:20, 22).

## Explosive Environment

A psychic medium was the guest speaker at a local occult center. I attended the

meeting to get a taped interview for research purposes. The interview was going well until I began to mention my faith in Jesus Christ and commented on the scripture references she had quoted out of context to condone her communication with the dead. She became irate and threatened to have me and my ministry destroyed. About 15 hostile occult practitioners surrounded me and began firing one question after the other—sometimes all at the same time. The Lord gave me composure and wisdom to share the reality of Christ and the evidence of Scripture in a volatile environment. A few days later, two of the women in attendance contacted me. They were so impressed with my comments that they wanted to begin a Bible study.

One who is on the path of life follows instruction, but one who ignores a rebuke goes astray (Proverbs 10:17).

## Look at Motives, Not Behavior

After getting out of my vehicle in a large parking lot to talk to a Christian plumber, whom I had not seen for quite a while, I expected the worst as I knew he had a bad attitude and a sharp tongue. Sure enough, he was belligerent within earshot of another person who was parked beside him. I said, “I see your disposition has not changed.” After a 15-minute conversation groping for words to encourage him in the Lord, I lightly pulled on his beard with my fingers, then patted him on the chest as I said, “Dennis, you have a tough exterior but inside you have a soft heart. You act hard to keep people from taking advantage of you.”

He smiled for the first time during our conversation as he admitted that what I said was true. He told me that, after being taken advantage of so many times, he developed a gruff personality to protect himself. As I was leaving, he graciously said to me that he wanted to get together and take me out to eat.

A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger calms a dispute (Proverbs 15:18).

## Ambushed

It was about 10 p.m. on a hot summer Saturday in June, and I was working late in my office at the ministry center. I was preparing to leave in two days for the Netherlands to perform a wedding and to speak at the Iranian Center in London to many former and current Muslims. Just a few days before this, I had scheduled speaking engagements in strong voodoo areas of Haiti. That same month, our June newsletter had a feature article entitled “Two Brothers” that told the story of two diverse paths that my oldest brother, Larry, and I had taken. The bottom line of the article focused on the fact that disobedience leads to disaster, but obedience leads to ultimate victory. The spiritual warfare around me began to intensify, but I never dreamed it would culminate in a showdown in my own

hometown.

The words of the wicked wait in ambush for blood, but the mouth of the upright will rescue them (Proverbs 12:6).

At the office late that evening, I received an unexpected phone call. It was a former prisoner whom we had helped for many years by sending him the books he requested. Tom seemed very calm and coherent on the phone as he said that my brother Larry (who recently completed two years at Teen Challenge for drug addiction) was at his house and was high on cocaine. He said that I needed to come and get Larry right away. He told me to come over and enter by a back alley, so it would not disturb his live-in girlfriend and her son.

As I touched the door handle to get in my vehicle, the Lord spoke one word to my heart, “Ambush.” I got on my knees by the vehicle and said, “Lord, whatever I am walking into, I need Your wisdom and protection”—especially with me leaving in a couple days for ministry in Europe.

I walked back in the house and told my wife, Karen, what I felt the Lord spoke to my heart. She insisted I take someone with me. Nevertheless, I assured her that I was still to go alone. I knew the enemy might be trying to set me up, but I could not be deterred. When I arrived, I thought there might be several guys hiding, waiting to attack me. I looked around as I got out of my vehicle but did not see anyone. Then, I saw my brother Larry sitting on a dimly lit back deck with this former prisoner. After talking for a few minutes and realizing that my brother was apparently okay and not on cocaine, I called Karen to reassure her that I was safe and that I would be home later.

As the three of us sat on the back deck talking, I asked my brother what was happening. Tom had seen my brother walking down the street and thought he was me. He then invited him to play horseshoes, and they had a few beers. The ensuing scenario was a deliberate setup.

I began sharing Christ with both of them. My brother sat there silently. At first, they were very receptive and polite, but then Tom began acting strange. He began to get increasingly aggressive in his conversation. His hostility grew as his body language and expressions became more intense. I discovered he had also been drinking whiskey and doing drugs, although he had concealed it very well on the phone earlier. Knowing the futility of talking to him that night I excused myself to leave.

He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself, and he who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself (Proverbs 9:7).

Tom got directly in my face and blocked the way. I knew that without the Lord’s intervention there was no way for me to leave without doing physical harm to him or him attempting to physically harm me. He started to curse the Lord and swear, spewing out accusations that ministers and Christians are fakes.

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will also be like him (Proverbs 26:4).

I responded to his hostility by telling him that Jesus Christ loved him and so did I. I told him, “You know that I am not a fake. You know that all the years you were in prison, I sent you books and Christian materials free of charge—never asking for a penny from you or anyone else. You know I live the life.” He acknowledged that and then said, “Prove what you have is real!” meaning he wanted me to demonstrate my martial arts skills or spar with him. I said, “You know that I have laid that down. I no longer war in the flesh. I trust the Lord to protect me.”

He stood in my face, eyeball to eyeball, trying to get me to fight him. He said, “You can probably kill me, but I still want to see what you have.” I repeated, “I have laid that down. I will not resort back to my old ways.” I did not want to use physical force against someone I had helped for many years and who had once professed faith in Jesus Christ.

Tom had a strong background in the martial arts and began to throw punches and do kicks within a fraction of an inch of my face and body.

Men of bloodshed hate the blameless, but the upright are concerned for his life (Proverbs 29:10).

I stood there unmoving and not flinching. I continued to look him in the face, letting him know that Christ still loves him, and he needs help. He continued to spew venom of hatred and hostility as he told me about horrible things that happened to him during his childhood and while he was in prison. He blamed God for allowing it.

Having been in many intense confrontations before, this one was different. It was as though I was not speaking to a mere human being but as if an evil spirit had taken control of him. The menacing eyes staring at me did not appear to be human, but those of a man possessed. Only God could have spared my life that fateful night. Tom seemed to continually be on the edge of a violent attack, but something kept restraining him—which I know was the Lord.

I prayed silently, “Lord, I need Your wisdom and help.” I knew that without God’s intervention, something tragic could happen. There was a real possibility that I might have to hurt or kill him to get out of there. I could have ended up in jail, not being able to go on the European ministry trip, and I would have definitely marred my testimony. I also could have been seriously injured or killed because he was in an extremely violent mood and had several martial arts weapons by him.

Tom pushed a wooden staff in my hands telling me to use it to demonstrate, which I am certain would have caused an escalation of hostility. Handing it back, I again repeated, “No, I have laid that down.” He demonstrated his skill with it to get me to respond. He lightly, but aggressively, smacked me alongside the temple

with it and then pushed it against my chest for me to take it. He thought I would flinch, but I stared at him unmoving, trusting the Lord to fight this battle.

A man will not be established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous will not be moved (Proverbs 12:3).

There appeared to be no way out of this confrontation without one of us being seriously injured or killed and my testimony being marred. I had nothing to gain and everything to lose. I continued sharing Christ's love with him, telling him the definition of true strength and self-control. I shared with him about going on mission trips and how God has protected me, as he continued to scream and swear. Tom calmed somewhat as I reminded him of my mother (whom he adored) who assisted with Bible studies in prison for him and other inmates.

Finally, after over an hour of this, it was time to leave. I told Tom that we would talk again. This time, he did not block my way. As I began to slowly back off his deck and out of his yard (so that there would be no surprise attack), I continued to talk to him. I was finally able to get my brother and myself into the vehicle.

As I pulled off his property, I thanked the Lord for protecting me from a near tragedy. As I drove Larry home, I asked him, "Why did you let me walk into this ambush?" He said that he did not know what Tom's intentions were but knew God was with me and that He would protect me. My brother said it was awesome how God gave me wisdom and control and how He protected me. Larry said he had no idea that this former prisoner was setting me up for that kind of a confrontation. He said Tom was trying to test me to see if the Lord truly changed me or if I would resort to my old ways. He said I proved I was genuine by not letting him force me to fight and go back to my old ways.

Several weeks later, while I was out of town on another trip, my son called from the ministry center to inform me that two messages were left on the ministry phone at around 3:00 a.m. by this same ex-prisoner. Tom said that my brother was back to his old tricks and was at his house drunk again and that I needed to come and get him. I later discovered, however, that Larry never went back to his house.

I called Tom on the phone and said I wanted to meet with him. I went to his house in the daytime. What a transition in character from the darkness of night to the brightness of day. As we sat on his front porch, he was as nice and friendly as he could possibly be. He said he could not remember the incident or the phone calls. I reminded him what happened and said, "No more phone calls like this." He was very apologetic and assured me there would be no more such calls. I talked to him again about the definition of true strength, self-control and that he needed to get his life back with the Lord who loved him and had a purpose for his life. He agreed and since then he has taken definite steps to do so. Tom died several years later at age 56. At the funeral home, I asked family members about his faith toward the end of his life. It was reassuring to learn that he had renewed



his commitment to Christ.

Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, reprove a wise man and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser, teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning (Proverbs 9:8-9).

## Craving for Truth

An 18-year-old in prison for auto theft wrote the following to me:

When I came to prison, I joined this club (mostly out of fear). Once I saw the things they were doing I knew this was not what I had in mind. I decided to attend a church function and enjoyed the Word of God, so I stood up and became a soldier for Christ. When I returned to the cellblock, I noticed other members from the gang. I approached them and told them I am no longer a member; I am now a soldier for Christ. One of the members crept behind me and threw me down, while the other members held me so he could cut me below my temple down to my cheekbone. I was rushed to the hospital where I received over 30 stitches because a group did not want me to turn to the Lord. Then they burned my entire cell when I was at the hospital. Nevertheless, my soul is craving for truth....

King Solomon, who received great wisdom and knowledge from God and ruled Israel from 971 - 931 BC, wrote:

My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, "Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood, let us ambush the innocent without cause; let us swallow them alive like Sheol, even whole, as those who go down to the pit; we will find all kinds of precious wealth, we will fill our houses with spoil; throw in your lot with us, we shall all have one purse," my son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path, for their feet run to evil and they hasten to shed blood...But they lie in wait for their own blood; they ambush their own lives. So are the ways of everyone who gains by violence; it takes away the life of its possessors (Proverbs 1:10-19).

## A World of Hurting People

I could share countless more illustrations of encounters I, or others, have had. Suffice it to say, there is a world of angry, hurting people who need to be loved, forgiven and encouraged. We must learn to look beyond people's behavior and words to see what motivates them. Usually, kind words bring healing.

Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones (Proverbs 16:24).

# Aggressive Behavior Can Be Dangerous



was told the following account, which supposedly happened to a guy who was in the Special Forces. (I often demonstrate this during self-defense classes to discourage bullying and antagonistic comments and behavior.) He was having a drink at a bar when a couple of bigger guys in another branch of the military began to harass him. He asked them to please leave him alone, but they kept on.

Finally, he said to the most aggressive one, “If you bother me one more time, I am going to tear off your ear and shove it down your throat!” They laughed and kept agitating him. With lightning speed, he struck; grazing the right side of the man’s face with his right hand as his little finger encircled the man’s ear. He quickly snapped his hand downward, ripping off the guy’s right ear, immediately followed by a right elbow strike to the man’s solar plexus. While gasping for air, the severed ear was shoved into his open mouth with a palm heel strike. Encircling his head with his right hand, he bent him forward as his right knee was thrust into the side of his face where his ear used to be.

Like one who seizes a dog by the ears is a passer-by who meddles in a quarrel not his own (Proverbs 26:17 NIV).

Another account is of a person who, when assaulted, pierced the attacker’s left eye with his right index finger, circled it behind the nasal bone and out the attacker’s right eye. Leading the attacker by the nasal bone, he threw him to the ground.

Whether these gruesome incidents actually occurred, I do not know. However, I use these illustrations to discourage people from being aggressive and to avoid escalating a confrontation. You never know what the person you are seeking to victimize or with whom you are having a conflict can do, not to mention what weapons they may have concealed, the friends who may be nearby

ready to jump in or to come back later to get revenge.

My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your sight; keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life to those who find them and health to all their body (Proverbs 4:20-22).

As a teen, I lifted weights one summer with a guy who was several years older, much stronger and was a high school wrestling coach. I thought he was a friend until he decided to show off in front of his wrestlers by humiliating me. He had all the advantages and started throwing me around on the mat like a rag doll.

Although I never trained in wrestling, I had a lot of determination and loved to “street” wrestle with my older brothers and their friends. My favorite technique was a headlock. Having had enough of the coach’s abuse on the mat, I put him in a headlock, squeezed as hard as I could, and hung on for dear life. After a short duration—which seemed like an eternity—he asked me to release my grasp as he said, “All right. Enough!”

A person of great anger will suffer the penalty, for if you rescue him, you will only have to do it again (Proverbs 19:19).

The Gaboon viper of West Central Africa is the largest of the African vipers. Its venom causes damage to cardiac tissue and is very deadly to humans. The fangs on these snakes can reach up to two inches in length. Usually docile in nature unless provoked, this viper bites and holds on while pumping large amounts of venom. Other venomous snakes typically strike and release.

Let me repeat it one more time as clearly as I can: do not provoke someone; they may not release their grip.

A wise man fears the LORD and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless (Proverbs 14:16 NIV).

A brother in Christ (who had been a wrestler in high school) greeted me with a handshake followed by an offensive thrust of his shoulder into my chest to unbalance me as he wryly commented, “I just want to take you down.” For a while I ignored his aggressive greeting, but after being repeated on several occasions, I said something like, “You do not want to be an instrument of the devil to provoke me to anger and to sin against the Lord as Moses did when he struck the rock. The Lord led me out of a lifestyle of fighting, but if you keep bumping me, I may retaliate. And I sure don’t want to tear out someone’s throat or gouge their eyes!” He never bumped into me again but greeted me cordially. He became a faithful prayer intercessor for me, my family and ministry.

A larger friend liked to playfully grab me in an attempt to put me in a submission hold. Knowing he was just goofing around, I usually offered little

resistance. One time, however, he unexpectedly surprised me. Instinctively, my left hand grabbed his throat while my right hand circled over his head with my palm on his forehead and two fingers pressing into his eyes. I rapidly released the grip of what could have proven to be a senseless tragedy.

HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST  
SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT (1 Peter 3:11).

When my wife was 13 or 14 (before we started dating), she was at a local park with a group of friends. It was starting to get dark, so everyone was leaving, and she wanted a ride home. Harry said he would take her home. She was reluctant until Little Joe told her Harry was safe. As they started walking toward his car, he said it was up this way a little further—separating them from the group and isolating her. She said, “I was just wanting to get home and was told he was safe by someone I trusted, so, although it seemed strange his car was that way, I went along.”

All of a sudden, he grabbed her arm and, with a knife pointed at her, said, “Take off your clothes.” She instantly kicked him as hard as she could (not knowing where she hit him) and ran through the woods with him chasing her. She waved down a car with an older couple and jumped in. They took her to the park police who gave her a ride home. She asked him not to tell her parents, or she would never be allowed back at the park again, so he didn’t tell them.

She told her older cousin, and he beat up the guy and told him to stay away from her. That’s how it was done back in the 1960s.

Righteousness guards the one whose way is blameless, but  
wickedness brings the sinner to ruin (Proverbs 13:6).

Once out of the Marine Corps, Bobby, a former “bouncer” and I began working out together. I was 17 and he was about 21. One day, after leaving the weight room, a girl about 20 who knew Bobby asked him to give her and her friend a ride to New York. He said he would, so the one girl jumped in the front seat with him while the other girl got in the back seat with me. Instead of taking them to New York as he promised, he drove down a country road. I never asked what he did, but as we were slowly driving down the back road, she opened the car door and jumped out. I looked out the rear window and saw her rolling along the side of the road, her clothes getting ripped up by the gravel. I thought, “We are going to jail!”

He immediately stopped his car, told the girl in the back seat to get out. He turned the car around and was heading down the road at about 100 mph. It was a straight road and way up ahead we saw the flashing lights of a police cruiser. We were certain they were there for us. Bobby pushed the gas pedal to the floor as he said, “Billy, I’m going to run it!” Suddenly, he changed his mind and slowed down before the police could detect our speed. But, all they were there for was a deer that was killed along the side of the road.

Bobby thought these girls were going to prosecute us, so one of his buddies who was called the “Hulk,” threatened to shoot them if they testified against us. However, all they wanted was their coats back. Obviously, several bad choices were made by these two girls, as well as by both Bobby and me—mistakes that should have never happened, but which could have resulted in tragedy.

Many other such foolish choices I made before my life was transformed through Jesus Christ could have led to calamitous consequences.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1:7).

# Self-Control Is Imperative



**W**e must learn to control our mouths, behavior, temper and fists. If we don't, they will lead to our demise.

A young man was warned by me to stop his violent behavior and to quit hanging out in places where erratic violence was likely to erupt. Failing to heed my advice, Andre was soon charged with involuntary manslaughter. Upon his release from prison, he refused to abandon his former lifestyle.

Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it (Psalm 34:14).

By chance, I saw Andre after his release from prison. We spent a few moments catching up. Before parting, I advised him to stop hanging out at bars and to control his temper before another tragedy happens. A few months later, at the age of 27, after having an argument with a man while drinking late at night in a bar, Andre punched him in the face. The man pulled out a gun and fired several shots with one hitting Andre in the torso as he ran outside into the parking lot. Andre was pronounced dead an hour later at the hospital.

...those who take up the sword will perish by the sword (Matthew 26:52).

In other words, violent people often die violent deaths. Andre's young life was shortened because of the wrong behavior, in the wrong place, at the wrong time and with the wrong person. If only he would have heeded the wise counsel of Scripture:

Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil (Proverbs 3:7).

What is evil? A simple explanation would be doing the things God's Word

tells us not to do, and not doing the things God's Word commands us to do. Basically, evil is to love the things God hates and to hate the things God loves.

There is no doubt the Bible is true concerning its warning of adverse consequences for rebellious and violent behavior. Since giving my life to Christ, I have been blessed for discovering God's way of living and protected many times as a result of learning self-defense from a biblical perspective.

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city (Proverbs 16:32).

You can go out and conquer a city—even conquer the world—but, if you cannot tame your spirit, you have not achieved the strength that God wants you to have. Controlling your own spirit, temper, desires, thoughts and behavior is better than conquering other people or achieving great accomplishments.

I have known those who could do phenomenal, almost superhuman, feats, yet they were unable to restrain their tongues or their tempers. They were powerless to control their lusts, jealousy, hatred, bitterness, worry or fear. Again, not strength but weakness. Is it really that impressive, and is there any real benefit, to being able to do incredible feats while the rest of your life is out of control? Far more important than external displays is the inner molding of one's character and spirit.

Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit (Proverbs 25:28).

In biblical days, cities often had walls built around them which made them strong and easy-to-defend fortresses. But, if the walls were broken down, the inhabitants were vulnerable and defenseless against an enemy's attack. So, God is saying, "If you have self-control, it's like having a wall around the city—you are strong. However, a person lacking self-control is weak, defenseless and vulnerable."



# Biblical Defense



As indicated in the book of Esther, the Jewish response to antisemitism was fasting, prayer, lobbying and self-defense. There were also several warrior-deliverers (Joshua, Samson, Gideon and others) who were empowered by the Spirit of God to engage in warfare and who were commended for their acts of faith in conquering kingdoms (Hebrews 11:30-38). King David thanked the Lord for preparing his hands for battle, “Blessed be the LORD, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle” (Psalm 144:1).

While the focus of this book is on personal self-defense, let me mention in passing that Scripture contains accounts of military campaigns that were obviously sanctioned by God. However, like many things in this fallen world, which God tolerates because of the hardness of human hearts (Matthew 19:8), it was not meant to be this way, nor will it be so in God’s eternal Kingdom (Revelation 21 and 22). Until then, God uses governing authorities and civil laws:

For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil (Romans 13:3-4).

The apostles’ response, when commanded by the Jewish authorities to disobey God, provides the “biblical balance” regarding obedience to orders that are contrary to God’s Word:

When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council [Sanhedrin]. The high priest questioned them, saying, “We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring

this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:27-29).

In a past edition of *The Berean Call*, Dave Hunt responded to a question regarding defending oneself or one's family. Excerpts follow:

There is no teaching in Scripture that forbids self-protection. There are, however, special conditions in which such an effort may not be what God desires. The Old Testament abounds with examples of armies and individuals raised up for the defense of Israel. David, as a young man, took on the Philistine giant Goliath for the glory of God and the protection of Israel. Gideon and Deborah, among other judges, were also used of God for the protection of Israel.

In the New Testament, we're told that governments restrain harm against their people by bearing arms (Romans 13:4). Soldiers were exhorted by John the Baptist to repent of intimidating and extorting people; they weren't told to leave their occupation. Jesus commended the Roman centurion for his faith, with no indication that his profession was unbiblical. Paul used military analogies throughout his Holy Spirit inspired writings.

Some Christians believe that it shows a lack of faith to arm oneself even in the face of imminent danger. To be armed is to not trust God as one's protector. I certainly trust God as my protector. I also trust God as my provider, yet I work. I trust God as my healer, yet I go to the doctor. The same holds true for protection. I look to the Lord ultimately to protect me and my family, yet there may be a time when arming myself for their protection is the prudent thing to do. It may be a matter of simply deterring wickedness, or more actively preventing the rape or murder of one's loved ones.

There also may be a time for a believer to give up his life for the testimony of the gospel and for Christ, just as Stephen, all the apostles except John, and the martyrs who are cited in Hebrews 11. How do we know when to defend ourselves and when not to? "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17). It's a matter of scriptural conviction and being led of the Lord.

## Passive, Aggressive, Assertive

God's Word does not teach us to be passive or aggressive but to be assertive. For example, when Saul threw the spear at him, David was not passive—he did not just sit there. Nor was he aggressive. He did not throw it back. He was assertive—he moved to avoid being hit.

Moses was more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth during his

time (Numbers 12:3). Yet, when the rebellious people he led out of Egyptian bondage opposed him on several occasions, he did not passively submit to them. Nor did he aggressively exert his authority and seek their destruction. Instead, he fell on his face before the Lord and assertively trusted the Lord to defend him and fight his battles.

Likewise, when the Jews sought to throw Jesus off of a cliff, He did not passively allow them to do so. Nor did He aggressively try to defend Himself or take some of them with Him. He assertively walked right through the crowd and went His way (Luke 4:29-30).

The magistrates in Acts 16:22-23 ordered Paul and Silas to be beaten and thrown into prison. They sent their officers the next day to release them, but Paul and Silas did not passively and quietly leave. Nor did they aggressively retaliate and seek revenge. They assertively insisted that, since they, as Roman citizens, were publicly beaten without a trial, the magistrates themselves must come and escort them from the prison (verses 35-39).

Whenever I am in a confrontation, being threatened or in a volatile situation, I always try to respond from a position of love, wisdom and self-control so as to adhere to New Testament truth and principles. Then I believe I am following the example set by Jesus and fulfilling His instruction of going the second mile and turning the other cheek.

If someone is attacking me for no reason, breaking into my house to harm my family, or, if I see someone being beaten up or raped, I would use whatever force necessary to resist or intervene. But, if I am being persecuted for my faith, then I will not use force to resist.

Someone once said to me, "If the person attacking or seeking to victimize me kills me, they send me to heaven. If I kill them, more than likely I send them to hell."

The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but He loves one who pursues righteousness (Proverbs 15:9).

## "Vengeance Is Mine" Says the Lord

Not only did Jesus say it, but Paul echoes similar words in Romans 12:17-21:

Never repay evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all people. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all people. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written: "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM; IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

One thing is certain by Jesus' words in Matthew 5:38-40 and the Apostle Paul's words in Romans 12:17-21: personal revenge is taken out of our hands.

Although outbursts of anger, fighting and getting revenge was my lifestyle, God has taught me that I do not use my mouth or fists to retaliate and get revenge. I stand for His truth in love and trust Him to fight my battles and, in His time and in His way, to bring about whatever He determines is proper recompense and resolution.

Do people get away with unfair aggression, animosity, antagonism and attacks? Definitely not. Justice might be meted out in this life or the next by a righteous, just and all-knowing God.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6).

As a new Christian, I was working at a quick lube place changing oil. Back then, I had lots of zeal, but not a lot of wisdom. I made sure every car had a gospel tract on its dashboard before it left.

One day, this man came in and had his oil changed. I put a tract about Jesus on his dashboard. He drove out and when he saw the tract, he was livid. He turned off his engine and came back in screaming, "Who put this tract in my car? I am a Jew. I do not want to hear about Jesus!" After he was done yelling, he got back in his car, but it would not start.

A few years later, his daughter accepted Jesus Christ as her Messiah through my wife and became one of our first staff members. We did not realize until later that it was her father who had yelled at me years earlier.

He said to her, "You will see when the Messiah comes, He will not have nail prints in His hands!" A few years later, while attending a church service with her sister, his oldest daughter had a vision of the Messiah. His hands were stretched out and she saw nail prints in them. She also accepted Yeshua (Jesus) as her Savior and Lord. Years later, both he and his wife received Yeshua as their Messiah.

God intervenes and deals in ways you and I could never conceive or ever accomplish with mere words or retaliation. Some things we must leave in God's hands.

Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails (Proverbs 19:21 NIV).

Fearful that my quitting karate would hurt his clientele, a high-ranking martial artist called me late one night and threatened, "I know guys who can come down there and take care of you if you don't quit speaking out against karate." He also started a rumor that I had been thrown out of karate instead of quitting on my own. I was going to confront him, but the Lord spoke to my heart,

Vengeance is Mine, I will repay” (Hebrews 10:30).

Not long thereafter, I read in the local newspaper that he was suing a national karate organization he was associated with for defamation of character. He claimed that he was not expelled from the organization but withdrew voluntarily; the very rumor he spread about me came back on him. The Lord deals with people in far better ways than we ever can. He fights my battles when I fall on my knees and ask for His help. He has always been faithful.

The righteous is delivered from trouble, and it comes to the wicked instead (Proverbs 11:8 NKJV).

Although he would have initially liked to see me silenced for writing a booklet on why I quit karate, years later he came by the ministry center. After giving him a tour of the property and knowing he may not have many years to live, I asked him, “Are you ready to meet the Lord?” He replied, “I hope so, Bill.” I responded, “You need to give your life to Jesus Christ and have your name written in the Book of Life.”

For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He watches all his paths (Proverbs 5:21).

While my witness was having an impact on the program manager at a local radio station, behind my back, another staff member there was trying to undermine everything I said. His hostility was a smoke screen to the real issue. He was offended because I did several radio broadcasts on overcoming sexual immorality. A few years later, he was arrested for child pornography. He opposed the light of the Gospel so it would not expose the darkness in his life. His undermining of my integrity and witness backfired because the program manager became a Christian while he ended up in prison. I pray he truly repents and accepts Christ.

In another situation, I could not understand why a married couple, who professed to be Christians, strongly opposed me after I spoke on the biblical principles of commitment, control, courage and sexual purity at their church. Their anger was confusing until a few years later when they came to me for help with their marriage—they were both addicted to pornography. There is always a motive for hostility toward the Lord and His Word.

I could cite more examples of people attempting to destroy me, my family or ministry. They were often battles I could not fight, let alone win—but the Lord ultimately did. Those who refused to relent of their sinister schemes and wicked ways, eventually faced their own demise.

He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him (Proverbs 26:27).

## Freedom to Choose

I strive to have the attitude that you cannot kill me, because I am already dead to self and alive in Christ. You cannot steal from me because I do not own anything—it is all the Lord's anyway. You can throw me in prison for my testimony of Jesus and the Word of God, but you cannot control or defeat me. Like Paul and Silas in Acts 16:25, I can still sing praises to the Lord. You can beat and hate me, but I can still choose to love you. You can curse and gossip, but I can pray for you.

But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you (Luke 6:27-28).

After the apostles were beaten for refusing to stop testifying about Jesus, Acts 5:41-42 states:

So they went on their way from the presence of the Council [Sanhedrin], rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

# The Essence of Strength



A man once acclaimed as “the deadliest man alive” asserted he taught the “deadliest and most terrifying fighting art known to man.” I was greatly impressed in my early teens by his ads in comic books which promised to teach readers how to maim, disfigure and kill. However, his vanity soon vanished as he spent much of his time near the end of his life living in fear, sitting behind a locked door with a gun on his lap. He died at age 36 in his sleep of internal hemorrhaging caused by a bleeding peptic ulcer and was buried in an unmarked grave.

As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, and its place acknowledges it no longer. But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him...to those who keep His covenant and remember His precepts to do them (Psalm 103:15-18).

## The Strongest Person

Do you know who is the strongest person who ever lived? Jesus Christ. He was frequently in situations of extreme pressure and volatile environments, but He always kept His composure (even when driving out the money changers in defense of His Father’s honor). He was in control of all situations; nobody controlled Him. He let them crucify Him. Before it was His time, He walked through crowds (Luke 4:30), hid Himself and went out (John 8:59) or eluded their grasp (John 10:39); He responded with questions (John 10:31-38); He silenced them with words of wisdom (Luke 20:20-40). Nobody controlled Jesus Christ.

As I read the Gospel accounts, I see that Jesus always operated from a position of love, wisdom and self-control. Interestingly, through observation,

experience and the examples of those in Scripture, I have learned that the essence of true strength is love, wisdom and self-control.

## Walk the Second Mile

During His famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said:

Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two (Matthew 5:41).

I wondered why Jesus said this and discovered that Roman soldiers not only walked almost everywhere they went, they carried heavy packs, weighing up to 100 pounds. Just as they forced Simon of Cyrene to carry Jesus' cross (Matthew 27:32), Roman law allowed military personnel to order those who were not Roman citizens to carry their equipment one Roman mile (estimated to have been around 4,850 feet, slightly shorter than a modern mile, which is 5,280 feet). If the civilian refused, he could be prosecuted under Roman law, which imposed harsh punishments to anyone who defied it. But, having reached the milestone marker, the civilian had no further obligation. If the soldier tried to force him to carry his pack farther, the soldier would be subject to punishment under the same Roman law.

When a Jew who was forced to carry a Roman soldier's weighty gear reached the milestone marker, they could drop the baggage and say, "This is as far as I go. I fulfilled what Roman law requires." Israel's Roman occupiers were often demeaning and oppressive in their treatment of the Jewish people, resulting in their desire for vengeance and to overthrow the despised Romans.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

Jesus said, "If they ask you to go one mile, go two." Why? One reason is that when a Roman soldier made them go one mile, the Roman was in control, but when they willingly chose to carry the gear one more mile they were saying, "You might have forced me to carry your load the first mile, but now I choose to carry it another mile." Instead of being victimized, the Christian shows himself to be the master of the situation, willingly and with a right attitude of heart, going the second mile.

Do not say, "I will repay evil"; wait for the LORD, and He will save you (Proverbs 20:22).

## Turn the Other Cheek

You have heard that it was said, "AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH." But I say to you, do not resist an evil



person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also (Matthew 5:38-40).

I always struggled with this verse. Turning the other cheek goes contrary to what comes naturally: unprovoked insult or injury prompts retaliation. One man I knew summed up my feeling when he said: “I believe in turning the other cheek. I will turn the other man’s cheek when I hit him first.” Creative interpretation, but I don’t think this is what Jesus had in mind.

It is interesting that Jesus specified the right cheek. Since most people are right-handed, the only way they can strike someone on the right cheek is with the back of their hand. That is the classic insult or challenge: a backhanded slap on the face. The strike on the right cheek was a most grievous insult in the ancient world—the prophet Micaiah was struck on the cheek by a false prophet (1 Kings 22:24). The ultimate example, however, is Jesus Christ (Isaiah 50:6).

Speaking of turning the other cheek, Jesus refers to the Old Testament *lex talionis* (law of retaliation). This law was not given to foster vengeance (the law explicitly forbade that—Leviticus 19:18)—but to limit the revenge one could take on another, preventing a blood feud which could easily escalate into retaliation far exceeding the original injury. In other words, if a man knocked out your tooth you could not break his neck for it (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:19-20; Deuteronomy 19:21). But now, Christ is teaching a more excellent way. If someone insults you or slights you in any way, take no further notice of it; respond with love, mercy and restraint. By forgiving the injury, you may prevent further hostilities and avert aggression.

Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses (Proverbs 10:12).

Comments on turning the other cheek by [gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org), are insightful:

The slap does not have to involve literal, physical violence. Even in our day, a “slap in the face” is a metaphor for an unexpected insult or offense. Did someone insult you? Let him, Jesus says. Are you shocked and offended? Don’t be. And don’t return insult for insult. Turn the other cheek.

Turning the other cheek does not imply pacifism, nor does it mean we place ourselves or others in danger. Jesus’ command to turn the other cheek is simply a command to forgo retaliation for personal offenses. He was not setting government foreign policy, and He was not throwing out the judicial system. Crimes can still be prosecuted, and wars can still be waged, but the follower of Christ need not defend his personal “rights” or avenge his honor.

Retaliation is what most people expect and how worldly people act. Turning the other cheek requires help from on high.

Responding to hatred with love and ignoring personal slights display the supernatural power of the indwelling Holy Spirit and may afford the chance to share the gospel.

Jesus was, of course, the perfect example of turning the other cheek because He was silent before His accusers and did not call down revenge from heaven on those who crucified Him. Instead, He prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

## Give Him Your Cloak

If someone wants to sue you and take your tunic (a garment worn next to the body), let him have your cloak (outer garment) as well (Matthew 5:40). Old Testament law forbade a creditor to keep a cloak overnight. A poor person might only have one inner garment with the outer garment serving as both coat and blanket. Under Jewish law, a legal case to regain one’s cloak would be certain.

If you ever take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in? And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear him, for I am gracious (Exodus 22:26-27).

Christ actually advocates assertive behavior here—being in control of the situation. So you think you have control over me because you took my shirt? Well, here is my coat too, given of my own free will.

There is a limit, however, to giving our clothes away. On mission trips, I usually give everything away that I bring, except what is worn home. During one mission trip to Haiti, outside the mission compound, I “bargained” for seashells and gave clothes away to several guys from nearby villages. Before I knew it, there were over 20 guys, and I quickly ran out of clothes! As I was going back inside the compound, one guy asked for my shoes, so I said, “Here, have my shoes.” Someone else wanted my shirt, so I said, “Take my shirt.” Another guy wanted the muscle shirt underneath my shirt, so I said, “Here, take it.” Then, this little kid said to me in broken English, “I go to school, and I got no socks,” as he points at my socks. So, I said, “Here, kid, have my socks.” The only thing left was my shorts. I raised my hands and said, “That’s as far as I go!”

## Gouge Out Your Eye

Jesus told His audience during the Sermon on the Mount:

Now if your right eye is causing you to sin, tear it out and throw it away from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if

your right hand is causing you to sin, cut it off and throw it away from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell (Matthew 5:29-30).

Did Jesus mean that we should literally tear out our right eye or cut off our right hand if they are causing us to sin, since, in the previous verse, He warned about looking with lust? Obviously not, or we would all be missing a right eye and a right hand. Besides, Jesus did not literally turn the other cheek when an official struck Him in the face, but He did answer him assertively (John 18:22-23). Jesus is not instructing His followers to mutilate our bodies to avoid sinning, but He was using hyperbole (exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally) to strongly emphasize that nothing is worth going to hell for and that we must be willing to make any sacrifice to follow Him (see Matthew 16:24-26).

## A More Excellent Way

What is the Lord saying to us in walking the second mile, turning the other cheek and giving away our cloak? He wants us to walk in love, not hatred; forgiveness, not revenge and retaliation; wisdom, not foolishness; strength, not weakness. He wants us to be victors, not victims. Nor does He want us to victimize others.

The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, to turn aside from the snares of death (Proverbs 13:14).

Sabina Wurmbrand, wife of The Voice of the Martyrs founder, Richard Wurmbrand, summarizes in one sentence the heart of Jesus Christ concerning forgiveness:

While others are bent on revenge, on ways of doing more evil than their neighbor, God gives the ability to return good for evil.

# Divine Protection



**R**egarding the long and dangerous journey from Babylon to Jerusalem through desert lands on roads frequented by bandits, Ezra, an important Jewish scribe, priest and direct descendent of Aaron, comments:

Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava [probably one of the streams of Mesopotamia which flowed into the Euphrates somewhere in the northwest of Babylonia], that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions. For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, “The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him.” So we fasted and sought our God concerning this matter, and He listened to our entreaty. Then we journeyed from the river Ahava on the twelfth of the first month to go to Jerusalem; and the hand of our God was over us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the ambushes by the way (Ezra 8:21-23, 31).

## The Lord's Assurance

People have attributed my seeming fearlessness and protection to martial arts training. However, that training could never stop a bullet or protect me from terrorists, suicide bombers, gangs, violent mobs and countless other threatening scenarios—but my Lord has.

Early in my ministry, the Lord assured me that my life would not be taken until His purpose was fulfilled. I have faced life-threatening situations throughout my ministry and during many adventurous mission trips to dangerous countries throughout the world. I have often been in potentially explosive situations:

threatened, surrounded, endangered; had spells put on me—even “prophecies” for my destruction. However, the God of the Bible has either given me the wisdom for how to deal with them or has intervened to protect me. A new book, *The Impossible*, documents some of the miraculous interventions the Lord has done in my life and ministry.

He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice, and He preserves the way of His godly ones (Proverbs 2:7-8).

This does not mean we will never be injured, attacked or even lose our lives, but the Lord will be with us and bring ultimate victory out of every adverse circumstance.

## The Lord’s Intervention

A booklet, *Why I Quit Karate*, reveals why I no longer train nor teach traditional karate. Besides, I have witnessed the Lord’s intervention in my life and family in some incredible ways that no amount of physical skills could have protected us. The following are a few examples:

God dramatically rescued me from unavoidably freezing to death in New Mexico.

A car battery exploded in my face—a miracle I was not blinded.

Karen’s life-threatening liver disease mysteriously disappeared.

Our two young children and three of their friends became separated from the group and wandered the streets of New York City by themselves for hours.

Attempted abduction of our pre-teen daughter was thwarted by a friend who pulled her free from a man trying to drag her into a van.

Armed guards in Jordan threatened to abduct our 13-year-old daughter from a bus.

Survived several near-tragic accidents, including a violent four-vehicle collision while traveling through Oregon.

Surrounded by 15 agitated and aggressive street people in Nigeria.

My son, two other team members and I were surrounded by approximately 40 hostile Haitians who were leaving a voodoo ceremony late at night.

In several Middle East countries during threatened attacks against U.S. citizens.

The first female suicide bomber detonated herself at the exact site where I stood 23 hours earlier after speaking to a Messianic congregation in Jerusalem.

My 13-year-old son and I were nearly hit and killed by a speeding bus in the mountains of northern India. It unexpectedly slid to a stop just two feet in front

of us.

Almost shot at a cult complex in West Virginia where the remains of murdered bodies were later found.

During his conversion, a witch doctor, our interpreter and I were supernaturally protected from being attacked by three angry men armed with machetes and a lead pipe.

I, along with my son-in-law, nephew and Indian host, narrowly escaped certain death when the vehicle in which we were traveling came within inches of going over the edge of the road in the Himalayan mountains.

Smuggled in and out of a country where it was forbidden to share the Gospel under penalty of prison or death.

My wife and I faced great peril when trapped in the California wildfires.

Bitten by a brown recluse spider—one of the most venomous spiders in the United States—yet without even leaving a mark on my body.

Clearly heard an unexplainable voice say “Stop!” as I started a right turn at a remote intersection in Jackson Center seconds before a semi-truck seemingly from nowhere whizzed by within a few feet of my vehicle.

Twenty years ago, when my wife was diagnosed with cancer, she was told she had less than five years to live.

Engulfed in flames with my shirt and hat on fire—yet two days later there was barely a trace of burns on my body.

Many other life-threatening situations in which the Lord protected.

Do not be afraid of sudden danger, nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes; for the LORD will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught (Proverbs 3:25-26).

Always remember, the essence of true strength is love, wisdom and self-control.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (Proverbs 9:10).

# For More Information

Bill Rudge has produced numerous books, pamphlets and audio messages on a variety of timely topics. For a complete listing or a copy of his informative newsletter, visit [www.billrudge.org](http://www.billrudge.org) or write to:

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